



# Outreach and Engagement

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# Learning Objectives

- ▶ This training will discuss how to build trusting relationships that strive to reduce the barriers and stigmas associated with accessing services.
  - Develop a general understanding of outreach and engagement
  - Discuss the qualities of a successful O&E worker
  - Become familiar with the phases and key activities of the relational O&E model



# How do people describe O&E?

- ▶ “Waiting for people to come to us didn’t work...so what we’re doing is going to where people are comfortable, to where they are right now, because that’s probably most effective.”
- ▶ It is what we all do when we meet people where they are and offer them some support, solutions, or kindness that helps in that moment.



# What is O&E?

- ▶ People use the word "outreach" to describe a wide range of activities, from actual delivery of services to dissemination of information.
- ▶ As a tool to help expand access to healthy services, practices or products, outreach is most often designed to accomplish one of the following (or some combination):
  - Directly deliver healthy services or products
  - Educate or inform the target population, increasing their knowledge and/or skills
  - Educate or inform people who interact with the target population
  - Establish beneficial connections between people and/or organizations



# What is O&E?

- ▶ “[E]ngagement practice seeks to build a relationship of trust and care with those who present unusual challenges and are the most difficult to serve.
- ▶ The process can take days, weeks, months, even years.
- ▶ The outreach worker must be present in a variety of ways with the individual, in brief moments and over long hours, on an unpredictable schedule, as the person is ready.”

Ken Kraybill, *Outreach to People Experiencing Homelessness: A Curriculum for Training Health Care for the Homeless Outreach Workers* (NCHC 2002)



# When does O&E happen?

- ▶ Someone asks about your services
- ▶ Someone enters your program
- ▶ When you introduce new staff
- ▶ When you offer a new service to an existing client



# Who do we provide O&E to?

- ▶ People or communities who are un and under served / ignored
- ▶ People or communities who experience barriers or stigma that discourages or prevents access
- ▶ People who may be mistrustful of services or the government



*People won't care what  
you know until they  
know that you care.*





# Qualities of an O&E Worker

- ▶ Flexible
- ▶ Empathetic
- ▶ Respectful
- ▶ Non-judgmental
- ▶ Tactful
- ▶ Committed
- ▶ Persistent
- ▶ Trustworthy
- ▶ Boundaries
- ▶ Relaxed
- ▶ Patient
- ▶ Resourceful

How do you demonstrate these qualities to people you work with?



# The Relational Outreach and Engagement Model

In the midst of the difficulties,  
we are involved in a complex  
but ultimately hopeful process.



# What is the relational O&E model?

- ▶ Approach
- ▶ Companionship
- ▶ Partnership
- ▶ Mutuality



# Approach

- ▶ Simply being present with the client, building a tentative connection.
- ▶ Meetings are unplanned.
- ▶ You have no agenda.



# Key Points in Approach

- ▶ Engagement is an active process.
- ▶ A trusting relationship is the goal.
- ▶ It may take a long time.
- ▶ You must be flexible.
- ▶ It happens as the client is ready.



# Tips for Approach

## ► Observe

- Is the person quiet, angry, nervous, talkative, drunk, psychotic, sleeping?

## ► Think ahead

- How will you introduce yourself (“case manager” vs. your name)? Who do you work for and what do you do? What is your “pickup line”?

## ► Give

- Gifts are a good icebreaker – socks, granola bar, lighter, batteries, bug repellent.



# Tips for Approach

## ▶ Connect

- Who do you know, that they might know? What do you have in common?

## ▶ Go Slow

- Don't push for too much information at first. Let the client set the pace. Listen for resistance.

## ▶ Ask Questions

- Questions shift power and make people more willing to share. Show genuine interest.  
Ask how they survive – what can they teach you?

## ▶ Give a sincere compliment



# Tips for Approach

- ▶ **Don't propose solutions**

- The goal is to hear what the person thinks they need. Listen, and remember what they say.

- ▶ **Be aware of your presence**

- Some things you can change, others you can't. Examples: physical posture, appearance, tone of voice, race/gender/class.

- ▶ **For the very resistant:**

- Talk to someone nearby instead. Your original subject may be listening!





# Why may people reject O&E attempts?

- ▶ They're scared.
- ▶ They've been rejected in the past.
- ▶ They're ashamed to ask for or accept help.
- ▶ They don't know or trust you (yet).
- ▶ You represent change, and change is hard.
- ▶ Honesty sometimes has negative consequences.
- ▶ They're sabotaging themselves.



# What to do with rejection?

- ▶ Rejection is often strategic – the client is watching for your reaction.
- ▶ If and when you're rejected:
  - Accept it gracefully.
  - End the encounter.
  - Let the subject decide whether (or when) to give you another chance.
- ▶ Don't punish anyone for protecting himself or herself.



# Companionship

- ▶ You are recognized, welcomed, and (maybe) trusted.
- ▶ Listen with empathy, trying to understand how the client sees him or herself.
- ▶ Note strengths and deficits.
- ▶ Offer help with small things.



# Key Points in Companionship

- ▶ Now, you can start proposing some solutions – but not to problems YOU see.
- ▶ Remember what the client wanted (from the approach stage).
- ▶ How can you help the client reach their self-identified goals? Example: ID and food stamps now, maybe housing later.
- ▶ Don't talk about the “barriers” that you have perceived just yet.



# Partnership

- ▶ You've built a trusting relationship with your client.
- ▶ They know that you care about their needs and want to help them achieve their goals.



# Key Points in Partnership

- ▶ Finally, you can start proposing some solutions of your own. In your opinion, what does the client need?
- ▶ What will they need to reach their own goals? How you can you help them get these things?
- ▶ Now you can talk in an open way about drug & alcohol use/abuse, mental health issues, and difficult personal history.



# Key Points in Partnership

- ▶ You introduce the client to other people and agencies who can help them achieve their goals – social workers, nurses, housing providers.
- ▶ You provide a trustworthy presence, information, and encouragement to the person who is connecting with other providers and services.



# Mutuality

- ▶ The client is fully engaged.
- ▶ You've helped the client achieve some of their preliminary goals.
- ▶ Other people now form much of the client's social support system.





# Things to watch out for:

- ▶ Moving too fast.
- ▶ Thinking you're at one stage while the client thinks you're at another
- ▶ Cynicism
- ▶ Frustration with slow pace
- ▶ Being judgmental
- ▶ Demands of work/supervisor



# Questions?



# Future Events

## ▶ April

- Learning Community: Older Adults (12–1 p)

## ▶ May

- Learning Community: Children & Families (12–1 p)

## ▶ June

- Learning Community: Transitional Age Youth (12–1 p)
- Provider Networking Event: Developing a Welcoming Environment (1 – 4:45p)

